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Educational and Child Psychology, 32(4):
Practising Psychology in Challenging Times

Editorial

A starting point for compiling the papers in this issue of *Educational and Child Psychology* is our view that applied psychologists may be found practising most often in the intersection of social cultures. In western societies, at least, social cultures are dominated by economic forces and, since the crisis in banking and ensuing recession in 2009, the name of the game has been 'austerity'. The effects of these economic forces have been seen in families, schools and communities. Simultaneously, notably in the UK, there has been a continuing trend for disinvestment in central and local government services (such as Health and Education) and an increased reliance on trading and private investment. Whether or not this will ultimately be seen as a 'good idea' remains unevaluated but, in the meantime the changes and sense of well-being experienced by many in several communities seems most likely to be viewed negatively and detrimental. Thus, applied psychologists may in practice be challenged both by their own personal experiences of austerity but also by the expressed concerns of others met in the course of professional activity. For us as 'educational' psychologists many of these phenomena converge in schools and in the experiences of young people and those charged with their well-being.

The papers we have collected attest to this convergence in different ways and offer different challenges and opportunities. However, a theme that runs through them all is a determination to understand how services may be provided to support the optimal development of young people (as the citizens of the future - and inheritors of the present) and to provide support for those (such as parents and teachers) who are most intimately and continuously concerned with the well-being of children and young people.

The papers may be read in any order. The first paper by Batul Al-khatib and Sarah Norris provides both an overview of some of the circumstances that may be found in many communities in the UK as well as ways in which practical support has been provided when other forms of support have atrophied. The paper by Debbie Stiles and her colleagues in St Louis, Missouri, describes the response of school staff to more extreme collision of cultures. In doing so Stiles and colleagues indicate some of the evidence of psychological insights that may ameliorate potentially fatal conflicts. Amanda Gaulter's paper also deals with the outcomes for minority groups and children migrating across cultures. How do school staff support and enable such children to thrive? A concern to better understand the well-being and resilience of school staff is the motivation for Ben Greenfield's paper in which he provides a systematic review of recent studies in that field. Leisa Randall and her colleagues provide an example of how educational psychologists in Scotland facilitated action research within schools to support the professional development of staff. Finally Tara Midgen reports her study of how the leadership of psychological services may address the practical and ethical challenges that confront services. These may be 'challenging times' but collectively

the papers in this collection demonstrate a determination to mediate and support the well-being of those who might otherwise be trapped in the interstices of conflicting cultures.

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